

American Citizen Services Newsletter

The U.S. Embassy is transmitting the following monthly newsletter via its warden system as a public service to U.S. citizens in Mongolia. Please feel free to disseminate this message to U.S. citizens in your organizations or to other Americans you know.



Become a fan of
U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar,
Consular Section on
Facebook.

American Citizens' Visa Hour
Every **Tuesday at 4:00pm** at
the Consular Section except on
U.S./local holidays.

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What Do You Think?

Will the U.S. government transport pets during a crisis?

In general, the U.S. government is not able to provide transportation assistance for your pets. In certain situations, if the pet can fit into an under-the-seat carrier, it can accompany the traveler. U.S. citizens traveling or residing abroad with pets should make alternate plans for their care or commercial transport if a crisis occurs abroad.

What the Department of State Can and Can't Do in a Crisis

What is the Department of State's role during a crisis overseas? Do you always evacuate U.S. citizens during a crisis overseas?

The actions we take depend on the nature of the crisis. In some instances, we may only need to provide information on conditions in the country, such as warning about areas of unrest, how and where to seek help, and other useful advice. In more serious situations, we may recommend that U.S. citizens leave the foreign country, and, if commercial transportation is not available, provide departure assistance, as our resources permit.

What departure assistance do you provide? Why do you tell U.S. citizens they should leave, and then don't offer transportation?

The assistance we provide depends upon the nature of the crisis. Regularly scheduled commercial flights or transportation are always the best option when local communications and transportation infrastructure are intact and operating normally, even if we have advised all U.S. citizens to leave. Our efforts are devoted to keeping the local U.S. citizen community informed of developments and travel options.

What happens during an evacuation?

Each evacuation depends on the nature of the crisis. In extreme situations, where local infrastructure is damaged or severely compromised, we work with the host government, other countries, and other U.S. government agencies to arrange chartered or non-commercial transportation for U.S. citizens seeking to depart. This could include transportation by air, land, or sea. While we partner closely with the Department of Defense, military options are only used as a last resort. You should not expect the U.S. military to assist you when we issue a Travel Warning advising you to leave a country.

Why don't you use the U.S. military in every evacuation?

We use the resources that are most expedient and appropriate to the situation. Expectations of rescue by helicopters, the U.S. military, and U.S. government-provided transportation with armed escorts reflect a Hollywood script more than reality. While some evacuations involve U.S. military or other U.S. government assets, most rely on commercial transportation and local infrastructure. Any level of departure assistance constitutes an enormous logistical effort.

Will the U.S. government come and pick me up if I need assistance getting to the airport or other evacuation point?

Crises place an enormous strain on our resources as embassy personnel focus on assisting U.S. citizens affected by the crisis. Security conditions can also limit our ability to move freely around the country. It is almost impossible for the U.S. government to provide in-country transportation service to individuals or specific

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groups during a foreign crisis. You should therefore pay close heed to our travel and safety information for the country they are traveling to or residing in, monitor local conditions, and have a plan of action in case of emergency.

Will the U.S. government pay for my travel? How much will it cost?

Departure assistance is expensive. U.S. law 22 U.S.C. 2671(b) (2) (A) requires that any departure assistance be provided "on a reimbursable basis to the maximum extent practicable." This means that evacuation costs are ultimately your responsibility; you will be asked to sign a form promising to repay the U.S. government. We charge you the equivalent of a full coach commercial fare on a comparable mode of transportation at the time that commercial travel ceases to be a viable option. You will be taken to a nearby safe location, where you will need to make your own onward travel arrangements. Typically, you will not have an opportunity to select the destination to which we will take you; it will be to the nearest safe location (only in rare circumstances will that be to the United States). If you are destitute, and private resources are not available to cover the cost of onward travel, you may be eligible for emergency financial assistance.

How can I receive updated information during a crisis?

We encourage all U.S. citizens traveling abroad, especially citizens who plan to be overseas for a significant amount of time, to enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). It is important that you keep your contact information up-to-date so that we can notify you or your designated emergency contact of developments and provide valuable information.

Also be sure to monitor our website, travel.state.gov, for updates, as this is our primary tool to disseminate important information during a crisis. Our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts are also good sources of information. Rest assured that in case of a crisis, we will make use of all available modes of communication to keep our citizens informed, including the internet, social media, TV, and radio.

If I don't hear from the embassy or I'm not enrolled in STEP, can I call them?

Often our embassies and consulates abroad cannot handle the huge volume of calls that follow a major crisis. We encourage you to contact us using Task Force Alert (see below for more details), special e-mail addresses established for public inquiries during a crisis, or our U.S.-based telephone number at 1-888-407-4747 (from overseas +1-202-501-4444).

How can I provide information about myself or my

U.S. citizen friends and loved ones who are affected by a crisis overseas?

The best way to contact us during a major crisis overseas is to [use this site](#) to send us information about yourself and your U.S. citizen friends and loved ones. This information will be added to the database that we use to locate U.S. citizens and offer emergency consular assistance during a crisis. (Note: This service does not automatically notify emergency medical or law enforcement officials. U.S. citizens who are experiencing an emergency that requires immediate medical or law enforcement response should contact appropriate local responders). This site should only be used to provide information about U.S. citizens who are in the affected foreign country; we do not collect information on non-U.S. citizens.

What if I don't have access to e-mail or phone?

We know that Internet and cell phone service is sometimes interrupted during a crisis. Land line phones might also be affected. In such cases, we will use local television and radio to broadcast emergency information and may also use a system of pre-designated U.S. citizen "wardens" to pass on information to other U.S. citizens in your area. We also encourage citizens to reach out to family and friends outside the affected area to obtain information and relay messages to and from the task force handling the crisis at the Department of State. Don't underestimate the power of social media – regularly updating your status through social media sites is an effective way to let your loved ones know how you are doing.

What about my family and friends who are not U.S. citizens? Will you help them depart the country?

During a crisis, our priority is assisting U.S. citizens. You should not expect to bring friends or relatives who are not U.S. citizens on U.S. government chartered or non-commercial transportation. Exceptions may be made to accommodate special family circumstances, such as when the spouse of a U.S. citizen is a legal permanent resident, or "green card" holder; however, it is the non-U.S. citizen's responsibility to be sure he or she has appropriate travel documentation for the destination location. Any services provided to non-U.S. citizens are on a space-available basis after U.S. citizens are accommodated.

If my U.S. passport is expired, will you still assist me?

We strongly recommend that all U.S. citizens traveling or residing abroad keep their travel documents up-to-date. If your U.S. passport expires, you may be required to obtain a valid emergency travel document from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate before traveling. In some cases, we may need to take additional steps to determine your citizenship.

Source: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/emergencies/crisis-support.html>

Did You Remember To File Your Taxes?

If not, don't worry. If you reside overseas or are in the military on duty outside the U.S., you are allowed an automatic 2-month extension to file your return until June 15. However, any tax due must have been paid by the original return due date (April 15) to avoid interest charges. **Topic 850 - Tax Information for Aliens and U.S. Citizens Living Abroad** can be found at: <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc850.html>

STATE TAX RETURNS: For individual state income tax information, visit <http://www.taxadmin.org/>. The Embassy does not have state tax forms or state tax information.

U.S. taxpayers are reminded of the requirements of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), which targets tax non-compliance by U.S. taxpayers with foreign accounts. FATCA focuses on reporting by U.S. taxpayers about certain foreign financial accounts and offshore assets and by foreign financial institutions about financial accounts held by U.S. taxpayers or foreign entities in which U.S. taxpayers hold a substantial ownership interest. The U.S. and Mongolia are working to conclude an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) in time for the June 30, 2014 deadline so that Mongolian financial institutions may afterwards begin obtaining consent from U.S. account holders to report basic account information to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Account holders who do not consent or fail to report may face penalties. For more information, go to the FATCA website: <http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Corporations/Foreign-Account-Tax-Compliance-Act-FATCA>

Voting Is Now Easier Than Ever Before

Be an Educated Voter. Check out the [FVAP links page](#) for helpful resources that will aid your research of candidates and issues you care about.

Voting and Taxes. Voting for candidates for *federal* offices does not affect your **federal or state tax liability**. Voting for candidates for state or local offices could affect your **state tax liability**. Consult legal counsel if you have questions.

For more information go to: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/abroad/legal-matters/benefits/voting.html>

*U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Mongolia are reminded to enroll with the U.S. Embassy by entering your travel itinerary and contact information into the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** at <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Don't forget to enter your email address, local address and phone number, if known, as well as your expected departure date from Mongolia. Entering your expected departure date will indicate when you do not need to receive ACS-related emails from the Embassy.*



TRAVEL WARNINGS

Ukraine April 16, 2014
Chad April 15, 2014
Colombia April 14, 2014
Sudan April 10, 2014

TRAVEL WARNINGS

Kenya April 4, 2014
Burundi April 3, 2014
Niger March 27, 2014
Mali March 21, 2014

For additional information about these travel warnings and alerts, please visit this website: <http://www.travel.state.gov/>

Warden Volunteers Needed!

We are searching for volunteers to act as wardens in Mongolia. If you are interested, please send an email to ulaanbaataracs@state.gov.

The United States warden system is not for the benefit of the Embassy, but for the American citizens living in Mongolia. Wardens in each district play an important role in the event of an emergency by contacting American citizens residing in Mongolia to ensure timely distribution of important information. It is a way for Americans to look after each other, which is particularly important in a place like Mongolia due to the distances between cities and difficult travel conditions.

The Embassy would appreciate your consideration for this important role. It also could be a great opportunity for you to take a few hours out of each quarter to become more familiar with American citizen neighbors, which might prove to be a rewarding experience.

Upcoming Holiday Closing in May

Monday, May 26 Memorial Day

Embassy Contact Information

American Citizen Services
U.S. Embassy
Denver Street #3
11th Micro District
Ulaanbaatar 14190 Mongolia
Tel: 976-7007-6001
Fax: 976-7007-6014

After-hours emergency number: 9911-4168

E-mail: UlaanbaatarACS@state.gov